

YAUDHEYA COIN MOULDS FROM SUNET, NEAR LUDHIANA IN THE SUTLEJ VALLEY

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IN a brief note published in May 1936 I described some Antiquities from the Khokra Kot mound at Rohtak in the Jumna valley.¹ The main subject of that note was the discovery of one of the mint-sites of the Yaudheyas, and a description of the moulds in which some of the earliest coins of this famous warrior people were cast. Since then my interest in the technique of coining in Ancient India has led me, as far as time allowed, to collect all available references to ancient coin moulds found in India, with a view to write a detailed paper on the subject, which I hope to publish in the near future.

In this quest I have been fortunate enough to come across some data which seem to indicate that the ancient site at Sunet, near the modern town of Ludhiana in the Punjab, was another of the mint-places of the Yaudheyas. At this place were cast some of the later Yaudheya coins, namely, those bearing on the obverse the figure of Kārttikeya holding a spear and the Brāhmī legend

*Yaudheyagaṇa-
sya jaya*

and on the reverse a human figure with one arm upraised, the other held on the hip, with a ring of dots round the margin of the coin (see Figs. 1, 2). This is a well-known copper coin which I think was first figured by Prinsep² in 1835 and later by several others. This coin is generally assigned to the third-fourth century A.D.; in any case it is distinctly later than the coins cast in the Rohtak moulds described by me in 1936.

My evidence for regarding Sunet as a probable mint-town of the later Yaudheyas is the fact that here a considerable number of clay moulds of the type of coin just described have been found from time to time during the last fifty-six years; although, strangely enough, the real nature of these finds has so long remained obscure.

In 1884 Dr. A. F. R. Hoernle³ exhibited before the Asiatic Society of Bengal a number of clay objects from Sunait (Sunet), all of which he referred to as "seals". Unfortunately none of these specimens were ever figured, but among them were three specimens which are of special interest to us here, and of these, luckily, Hoernle gave a very clear and detailed description, showing that they bore the obverse and reverse designs of the Yaudheya coin above mentioned. Two of them bore the reverse design and one the obverse; the impression in each case was in the negative.

Hoernle was evidently puzzled as to the purpose for which these "three exceptional seals" might have been employed; and somehow it did not occur to him that they were coin moulds. He believed that the designs must have been made by pressing actual coins into the clay before it was baked, and this may well have been the case, because coins have commonly been used as models for moulds. But in discussing the purpose for which these so-called seals were used he offered a conjecture which appeared to me needlessly far-fetched. He suggested that they may have been made by the poorer pilgrims as a cheap sort of votive tablets to escape payment for the more expensive properly stamped tablets supplied by the temple authorities. As we shall see, these supposed seals or votive tablets of Dr. Hoernle were in reality coin moulds of the Yaudheyas. In fact they were, so far as I know at present, the first coin moulds of Ancient India ever to be described.

Hoernle's originals, as stated, were exhibited before the Asiatic Society at Calcutta. Hoping that they might still be preserved at the Indian Museum I was trying to obtain a loan of them when, through a remarkable coincidence, I received in November last, from a totally unexpected quarter (namely the Bhārat Kalā Bhawan at Benares), a collection of no less than 38 clay moulds

¹ Sahni, *Curr. Sci.*, 1936, 4, No. 11, 796-801.

² Prinsep, *Jour. As. Soc. Bengal*, 1835, 4, 621-43.

³ Hoernle, *Proc. As. Soc. Bengal.*, 1884, 53, 137-40,

answering so exactly to the description given by Hoernle that there can be no doubt they were of the same nature. These 38 moulds also came from Sunet, but they had been discovered only within the last couple of years. Twenty-five of them had been purchased by the distinguished historian Prof. Jaya Chandra Vidyalankar at the modern village of Sunet on September 13, 1938, and the rest were similarly acquired on the spot by his pupil Mr. Amrit Pal on August 8, 1940. All these specimens are now in the Bhārat Kalā Bhawan (Museum of Indian Art and Archæology) at Benares, and I owe it to the generosity of my friend Rai Krishnadasa, founder and director of the Kalā Bhawan, and to the kind offices of Prof. Jaya Chandra, that I am here able to describe some of these interesting finds (see Figs. 3-6). I ought to add that before I had seen the Benares specimens Rai Krishnadasa was already sure that these objects were coin moulds. In fact he originally had the intention to describe them himself. That he so readily placed his material at my disposal is characteristic of him.

That the figured specimens can only be coin moulds and not seals is evident from the following facts: (a) There is a channel for the inflow of molten metal across the margin, clearly seen in several of the more complete specimens. (b) One specimen consists of two pieces still coupled together, with the remains of a clay plaster casing adhering round their outer margins, showing that the moulds were cast in a series of discs which were plastered together into a cylindrical pile. (c) The raised margin immediately round each coin socket has a rough, fractured surface, showing that two coupled moulds have been broken apart. (d) The back of each disc also has a rough, fractured surface. It is neither smooth and domed, as in many true seals, nor is it formed into a ridge to enable it to be held between the thumb and finger; nor, again, are there any string holes in any of the specimens. In most cases the back has a rough surface, suggesting that the discs were originally coupled together and were later split apart when the mould was broken up for taking out the coins.

These undoubted coin moulds from the Kalā Bhawan's collection had already convinced me that Hoernle's specimens (which I was still hoping to obtain from Calcutta)

must be of the same nature. It was therefore no surprise to me when on January 10, 1941, I received through the kindness of Mr. T. N. Ramachandran, Superintendent of the Archæological Section at the Indian Museum, a number of specimens showing identically the same features as those just described. The Indian Museum moulds are in a better state of preservation; several of these are figured here for comparison with those from the Kalā Bhawan (see Figs. 7-12).

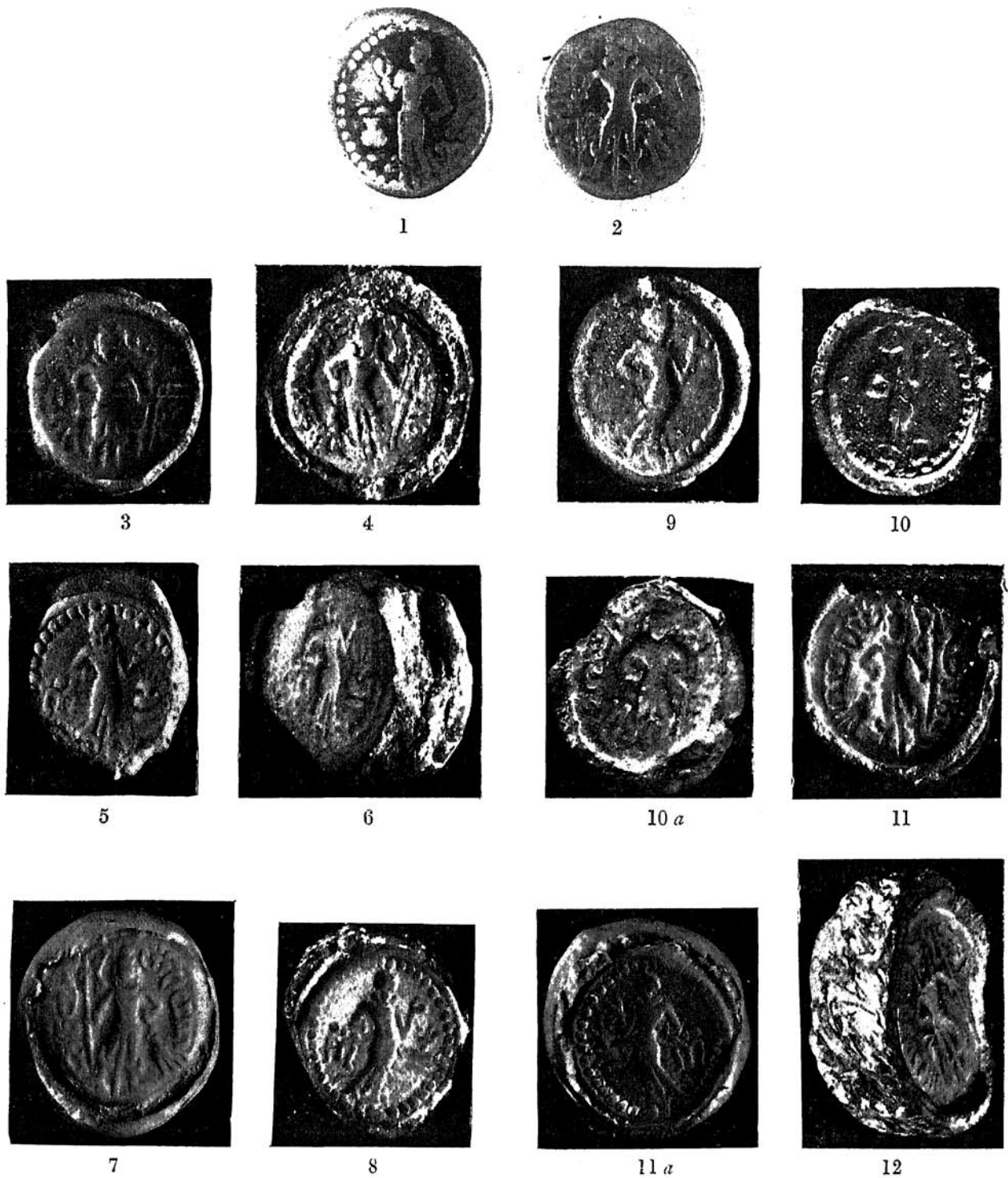
This collection from Calcutta, however, brought me a real surprise in another way. It was not the mere three specimens described by Hoernle in 1884 that Mr. Ramachandran had sent in response to my request, but a handsome series of as many as 41 coin moulds. Whether Hoernle's originals are amongst them it is not possible for me to say, because these were never figured, and there are no other indications to identify them. But after what I have said above there can be no doubt that Hoernle's pieces were of the same nature and date as those brought to light by Professor Jaya Chandra over half a century later. What is more, the fact that instead of Hoernle's three specimens so many more have now turned up from the Calcutta Museum shows that after the original find at Sunet a number of further moulds were discovered at the same locality, at a date or dates of which at present I have no information.

The suggestion is therefore not unjustified that at Sunet there must still be many more coin moulds of the same type, waiting to be unearthed, and that quite probably this modern village marks the site of a regular mint of the later Yaudheyas. A systematic enquiry on the spot, and a trial excavation of the area from where these moulds were obtained as surface finds, thus promises to be of considerable interest.

In the end, I have pleasure in expressing my sincere thanks to my assistant, Mr. R. V. Sitholey, M.Sc., who has kindly prepared all the photographs.

Postscript added 30th January 1941.—

Mr. V. S. Agrawala, M.A., Curator of the Provincial Museum, Lucknow (who has kindly read the above paper in MS.) has been able to identify the ancient name of Sunet. He writes (Jan. 25): "In the Sankalādi group of the sūtra IV.2.75. Paṇini, the



Figs. 1, 2. Reverse and obverse of two coins kindly lent by Mr. Jai Krishna Agrawal of Lucknow. Nat. size.

Figs. 3-6. Moulds from the Bhārat Kalā Bhawan (Benares). 3 shows a groove for the inflow of metal across the top left margin, 4 across the bottom margin; both are negatives of the obverse face. 5 and 6 show the negative of the reverse face. 6 is a double mould photographed obliquely to show the two coupled discs; the lower disc bears on its exposed face which is turned away from view a negative of the obverse. The registered numbers of the Kalā Bhawan's collection are as follows: Fig. 3=97·269; Fig. 4=97·272; Fig. 5=97·260; Fig. 6=97·266. All nat. size.

Figs. 7-12. Moulds from the Indian Museum (Calcutta). 7-10 show grooves for the inflow of metal across the top margin (7) or across the right margin (8-10). 7 and 8 are plain reverse impressions, without the objects shown in front and behind the standing figure in 11. 10 *a* and 11 *a* are positives made in plasticine from 10 and 11. 12 is a double mould photographed obliquely to show the cylinder of plaster (clay mixed with fibrous vegetable matter) round the coupled discs; the hidden lower disc shows on its exposed face not in view a negative of the reverse. Registered numbers, 7=9162; 8=9165; 9=9199; 10=9195; 11=9183; 12=9202. All nat. size.

great grammarian, reads Sunetra in a geographical context. The place founded by Sunetra would be called Saunetra and this seems the ancient name of this place Sunetra according to the Mahābhārata (Ādi-parva 94.61) was one of the three sons of the elder Dhṛitarāshṭra The name of the Yaudheya republic occurs in Panini's

Ashtādhyāyī and it is appropriate that he was also acquainted with the name of one of their important towns. This reference takes back the antiquity of Sunet to about 500 B.C., which point commends it as a very suitable place for further exploration".

I am grateful to Mr. Agrawala for permission to quote from his letter to me.
